The Bishop Murder Case

A PHILO VANCE STORY

BY S. S. VAN DINE

SYNOPSIS

Philo Vance, wealthy New York Bachelor recluse and student of criminology, receives a telephone call from John F. X. Markham, District Attorney of New York and his friend of 18 years standing, regarding a startling, fantastic crime just perpetrated.

CHAPTER I.—(Cont'd.)

It was not surprising, therefore, that Markham should have turned to Vance at the very beginning of the Bishop murder case. More and more, I had noticed, he had come to rely on the other's help in his criminal investigations; and in the present instance it was particularly fortunate that he appealed to Vance, for only through an intimate knowledge of the abnormal psychological manifestations of the human mind, such as Vance possessed, could that black, insensate plot have been contravened and the perpetrator unearthed.

"This whole thing may be a more's-nest," said Markham, without conviction. "But I thought you might want to come along. . . . ."

"Oh, quite!" Vance gave Markham a sardonic smile. "Sit down a moment and tell me the tale coherently. The corpse won't run away And it's best to get our facts in some kind of order before we view the remains. Who are the parties of the rfist part, for instance? And why the projection of the District Attorney's office into a murder case within an hour of the deceaseds passing All that you've told me so far resolves itself into the utterest nonsense."

Markham sat down gloomily on the edge of a chair and inspected the end of his cigar.

"Damn it, Vance! Don't start in with a mysteries-of-Udolpho attitude. The crime—if it is a crime—seems clear-cut enough. It's an unusual method of murder, I'll admit; but it's certainly not senseless. Archery has become quite a fad of late. Bows and arrows are in use today in practically every city and college in America."

"Granted. But it's been a long time since they were used to kill persons named Robin."

Markham's eyes narrowed, and he looked at Vance searchingly.

"That idea occurred to you, too, did it?"

"Occurred to me? It leaped to my brain the moment you mentioned the victim's name." Vance puffed a moment on his cigarette. "Who killed Cock Robin?" And with a bow and arrow! . . . Queer how the doggerel learned in childhood clings to the memory. By the way, what was the unfortunate Mr. Robin's first name?"

"Joseph, I believe."

"Neither edifyin' nor suggestive. . . Any middle name?"

"See here, Vance!" Markham rose irritably. "What has the murdered man's middle name to do with the case?"

"I haven't the groggiest. Only as long as we're going insane we may as well go the whole way. A mere shred of sanity is of no value."

He rang for Currie and sent him for the telephone directory. Markham protested, but Vance pretended not to hear, and when the directory arrived he thumbed its pages for several moments.

"Did the departed live on Riverside Drive?" he asked finally, holding his finger on a name he had found.

"I think he did."

"Well, well." Vance closed the book and fixed a quizzically triumphant gaze on the District Attorney. "Markham," he said slowly, "there's only one Joseph Robin listed in the telephone directory He lives on Riverside Drive, and his middle name is Cochrane!"

"What rot is this?" Markham's tone was almost ferocious. "Suppose his name was Cochrane; are you seriously suggesting that the fact had anything to do with his being murdered?"

"'Pon my word, old man, I'm suggestin gnothing." Vance shrugged his shoulders slightly. "Im merely jotting down, so to speak, a few facts in connection with the case. As the mattr stands now, a Mr. Joseph Cochrane Robin—to wit: Cock Robin has been killed with a bow and arrow. Doesnt that strike even your legal mind as deuced queer?"

"No!" aMrkham fairly spat the negative. "he name of the dead man is certainly common enough; and it's a wonder more people haven't been killed or injured with all this revival of archery throughout the country. Moreover, it's wholly possible that Robins death was the result of an accident."

"Oh, my aunt!" Vance wagged his head reprovingly. "That fact, even were it true, wouldn't help the situation any. It would only make it queerer. Of the thousands of archery enthusiasts in these fair states, the one with the name of Cock Robin should be accidentally killed with an arrow! Such a supposition would lead us into spiritism and demonology and whatnot. Do you, by any chance, believe in Eblises and Azazels and jinn who go about playing Satanic jokes on mankind?"

"Must I be a Mohammedan mythologist to admit coincidences?" returned Markham tartly.

"My dear fellow! The proverbial long arm of coincidence doesn't extend to infinity. There are, after all, laws of probability, based on quite definite mathematical formulas. It would make me sad to think that such men as Laplace and Czuber and Von Kries had lived in vain. The present situation, however, is even more complicated than you suspect. For instance, you mentioned over the phone that the last person known to have been with Robin before his death is named Sperling."

"And what esoteric significance lies in that fact?"

"Perhaps you know what Sperling means in German," suggested Vance dulcetly.

"I've been to High School," retorted Markham. Then his eyes opened slightly, and his body became tense.

Vance pushed the German dictionary toward him.

"Well, anyway, look up the word. We might as well be thorough. I looked it up myself. I was afraid my imagination was playing tricks on me, and I had a yearnin' to see the word in black and white."

Markham opened the book in silence, and let his eye run down the page. After staring at the word for several moments he drew himself up resolutely, as if fighting off a spell. When he spoke his voice was defiantly belligerent.

"Sperling means 'sparrow.' Any school boy knows that. What of it?"

"Oh, to be sure." Vance lit another cigarette languidly. "And any school boy knows the old nursery rhyme entitled 'The Death and Burial of Cock Robin,' what?" He glanced tantalizingly at Markham, who stood immobile, staring out into the spring sunshine. "Since you pretend to be unfamiliar with that childhood classic, permit me to recite the first stanza."

A chill, as of some unseen spectral presence, passed over me as Vance repeated those old familiar lines:

"Who killed ock Robin?
'I,' said the sparrow,
'With my bow and arrow.
I killed Cock Robin.'"

CHAPTER II.

Slowly Markham brought his eyes back to Vance.

"It's mad," he remarked, like a man confronted with something at once inexplicable and terrifying.

"Tut, tut!" Vance waved his hand airily. "That's plagiarism. I said it first." (He was striving to overcome his own sense of perplexity by a lightness of attitude.) "And now there really should be an inamorata to bewail Mr. Robin's passing. You recall, perhaps, the stanza:

"Who'll be chief mourner?
'I,' said the love,
'I mourn my lost love;
I'll be chief mourner'."

Markham's head jerked slightly, and his ngers beat a nervous tattoo on the table.

"Good God, Vance! There is a girl in the case. And there's a possiiblity that jealousy lies at the bottom of this thing."

"Fancy that, now! I'm afraid the affair is going to develop into a kind of tableau-vivant for grown-up kindergartners, what? But that'll make our task easier. All we'll have to do is to nd the fly."

"The fly?"

"The *Musca domestica*, to speak pedantically. . . . My dear Markham, have you forgotten?—

"Who saw him doe?
'I,' said the fly,
'With my little eye;
I saw him die'."

"Come down to earth!" Markham spoke with acerbity. "This isn't a child's game. It's damned serious business."

Vance nodded abstractedly.

"A child's game is sometimes the most serious business in life.' His words held a curious, far-away tone. "I dont like this thing. I don't at all like it. There's too much of the child in it—the child born old and with a diseased mind. It's like some hideous perversion." He took a deep inhalation on his cigarette, and made a slight gesture of repugnance. "Give me the details. Let's find out where we stand in this topsy-turvy land."

Markham again seatd himself.

"I haven't many details. I told you practically everything I know of the case over the phone. Old Professor Dillard called me shortly before I communicated with you—"

"Dillard? By any chance, Professor Bertrand Dillard?"

"Yes. The tragedy took place at his house. You know him?"

"Not personally. I know him only as the world of science knows him—as one of the greatest living mathematical physicists. I have most of his books. How did he happen to call you?"

"I've known him for nearly twenty years. I had mathematics under him at Columbia, and later did some legal work for him. When Robin's body was found he phoned me at once—about half past eleven. I called up Sergeant Heath at the Homicide Bureau and turned the case over to him—although I told him I'd come along personally later on. Then I phoned you. The Sergeant and his men are waiting for me now at the Dillard home."

(To be continued.)

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AFTER EVERY MEAL

ISSUE No. 41—'30

What New York Is Wearing

BY ANNABELLE WORTHINGTON

Illustrated Dressmaking Lesson Furnished With Every Pattern

The lengthened line is apparent at a glance in a rusty brown crepy woolen with coin dots in lighter shade.

It has the new circular draped skirt in wrapped arrangement that slenderizes the figure.

The bodice moulds the figure with swathed treatment across the front with lower part in diagonal line that minimizes the breadth through the hips.

The flared cuffs of the elbow sleeves are a smart new detail. The shawl collar is of plain woolen matching the dots.

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Black canton crepe with self-fabric collar and cuffs is smart for all-day occasions.

HOW TO ORDER PATTERNS.

Write your name and address plainly, giving number and size of such patterns as you want. Enclose 20c in stamps or coin (coin preferred; wrap it carefully) for each number, and address your order to Wilson Pattern Service, 73 West Adelaide St., Toronto.

Corn Cake

Three-fourths cup cornmeal, 1 cup flour, ¼ cup sugar, 4 teaspoons baking powder, ½ teaspoon salt, 1 egg well beaten, 1 cup milk, 2 tablespoons melted fat (I used butter). Mix and sift dry ingredients; add egg, well beaten, milk and melted fot. Beat. Bake in a shallow, greased pan in a hot (450 degs.) oven 20 minutes or more. One cup sour milk may be used in place of sweet milk, using ½ teaspoon soda and only 2 teaspoons baking powder.

For Dry Skin—Minard's Liniment.

Keep Your Children Healthy and Happy

The many silly superstitions which still exist in regard to babies are a danger to their health and development. For instance, the senseless belief that a baby must not have its finger nails cut or it will grow up a thief.

One has only to walk through a clinic or hospital to see the mischief caused by babies' dirty finger nails. A child develops pimples, due probably to wrong feeding; it scratches them with its dirty nails and septic sores are the result. The number of babies covered with septic sores brought about by dirty finger nails is a disgrace.

Then there is the ridiculous superstition that a baby must not be weighed at birth, or it will die. No doubt this had its origin in the dim and dark past when people were afraid to let air and water touch their bodies; but even to-day there are hundreds of mothers who will not allow their babies to be weighed, and for the first few months of their lives muffle them up in such a way that the poor mites can scarcely breathe. When this is done, their lungs fail to expand properly, and they develop chronic complaints which cripple them in later life.

A baby must have a "taste" of everytLing or it will grow up with an inability to earn enough to buy such things for itself! How many babies' digestions are ruined and stomachs permanently injured by giving them "tastes" of the family dinner at a time when they should be having nothing but their natural food?

People fail to realize that a baby's stomach is a delicate and sensitive thing, and that to load it with all sorts of things the child does not want instinctively gives the nerves of the stomach such a tremendous shock that the ill-effects are carried to all parts of the body, with disastrous results.

Some mothers believe that a child will not rise in the world if it goes down first, and a nurse who deliberately mounts a chair with a new-born baby in her arms before she takes it downstairs makes herself ridiculous.

When people persist in making a child go "Up! Up! Up!" and throw it into the air, it is too much for the infant's nerves. A small child is often terrified as it finds itself tossed in the air, and its nerves are strung to a fearful tension. One has only to watch a baby's face to see it. Observe the look in the eyes; the strained appearance of the mouth, even although it may laugh afterwards.

Treat your child naturally. Let it develop on natural lines. Forget old superstitions and give your baby a chance to grow up unhampered by old customs and traditions.

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Old Plant Lore Will Aid Modern Science

Recovery for use in modern medicine of the true fraction of ancient plant lore possessed by the monks, physicians and 'herb doctors" or herbalists of the Middle Ages was urged by Dr. A. V. Hill, distinguished English botanist and head of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, in a recent address to students of the School of Pharmacy in that city. Use of roots, seeds, leaves, fruits and other parts of plants as ancient drugs was dominated largely, Dr. Hill said, by the so-called idea of "signatures," which imagined each plant to carr. somewhere about it a sign of what it was good for. A plant with a blood-red root, like a garden beet, would be imagined, for example, to be good for hemorrhage or for disease of the blood. In spite of this baseless idea, however, the monks and herbalists who actually gathered and prescribed these drugs acquired a surprising amount of accurate knowledge, Dr. Hill maintained, concerning the real effects of these drugs on the human body. Much of this knowledge already has been embodied in modern medicine, like the modern use of such ancient plant drugs as strychnine and opium. Dr. Hill believes it probable, however, that some useful drugs known to ancient physicians have been abandoned because modern medicine has not studied them sufficiently. Some kinds of plants, for example, seem to vary in medical potency depending upon the variety of the plant, the place where it was grown, and so on. When a single modern test fails to confirm ancient ideas that may be because the wrong variety of the plant was tested or because the tested sample had, for some other reason, a potency less than was familiar to the ancient physicians.

Use Minard's Liniment for Toothache.

Forceful Freddie—"I mean to marry your daughter, sir, and what's more, I'm going to do it. Do you follow me?" Proud Parent—"Yes, as far as the door."

Lieutenant—"When is a man entitled to be buried with military honors?" Recruit—"When he is dead, sir."

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO EMPLOYERS OF LABOR

Attention having been directed to the scarcity of work in this City at the present time, employers of labor are asked to try and help to relieve the situation by engaging only bona fide residents of Toronto on any available work.

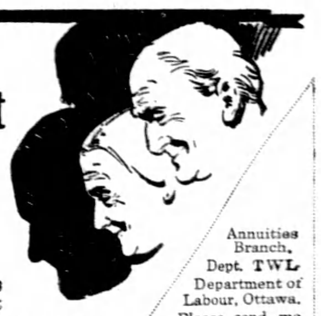
NON-RESIDENTS

Notice is hereby given that no assistance or relief will be given to non-residents of the City of Toronto on account of their being out of employment.

BERT S. WEMP,
Mayor.

Mayor's Office,
Toronto, October 24th, 1930.

Give a Thought to OLD AGE



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